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ABSTRACT

The Baylor Principals' Center in Waco, Texas, offers programs in the Texas cities of Waco, Corsicana, and Killeen. Advanced instructional leadership training workshops consist of 12 hours of training. Incorporated into the meetings of the instructional leadership sessions are collegial circles made up of from six to eight people assigned in a cross-district job-alike format who share their ideas about common concerns, and who have input into the programs and activities of the center. The latest information from the Texas Education Agency is shared at meetings where meals are served. During the 1985-86 school year topics such as discipline management, the new Texas Teacher Appraisal System, and promotion and retention policies were discussed. Major speakers are scheduled to address the members four times a year, and monthly meetings of principals are held in the three cities. Past experiences with these programs are evaluated and information is provided concerning funding for the programs, press coverage, and relationship to Baylor University. The report concludes with a 15-statement list of things learned that would be beneficial to others interested in developing similar centers as well as a summation of the center's goals to help principals grow personally and professionally. (MLF)

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THE BAYLOR PRINCIPALS' CENTER: DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP THROUGH QUALITY PROGRAMS

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THE BAYLOR PRINCIPALS' CENTER: DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP THROUGH QUALITY PROGRAMS

by Dwain M. Estes and David Crowder

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Some of the conclusions that have been reached through educational research have been well documented for so long that they are almost axiomatic in terms of developing effective schools. Many of these conclusions have to do with the role of the principal. Research indicates that principals set the tone for individual schools, that principals must function as instructional leaders if schools are to educate children properly, and that principals who are committed to their personal growth and learning are more effective than those who are not.

The Baylor Principals' Center was begun in 1984 to help principals grow personally and professionally. Since that time, we have endeavored to develop programs that would encourage and facilitate that growth. Our program development has been based on Dr. Roland Barth's suggested criteria of what principals perceive to be their needs, what others perceive to be their needs, and how to meet these needs in a way that will encourage the principals to be active, sustained, life-long learners.

The Baylor Principals' Center serves a diversity of school districts and approaches to school administration, from districts with two large high schools to districts with a total school population of 117 (K-12.) The 1986-87 membership count for the Principals' Center is 307. The geographic region served by the Center covers an area of approximately 15,000 square miles. This large area requires that we offer our programs in three locations

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to enable our entire membership easy access to meetings. We hold sessions in Waco, where Baylor is located, Corsicana, which is northeast of Waco, and in Killeen, which is southwest of Waco.

The Center is now engaged in five major programs to meet the needs of principals. A brief description of each is listed below:

1. **Advanced Instructional Leadership** - This training consists of twelve clock hours of training for all certificated administrators in Texas public schools.

2. **Collegial Circles** - Small groups of six to eight participants who are organized across district lines and in a job-alike format. These groups are designed to encourage discussion about problems and concerns among school administrators. They meet at the Advanced Instructional Leadership Training sessions, and in some cases on their own.

3. **Meal Functions** - Periodically throughout the year, we provide opportunities for representatives from the Texas Education Agency to speak to our participants at a series of meal functions beginning with dinner in Corsicana, followed the next day by breakfast in Waco, brunch in Temple, and lunch in Killeen.

4. **Major Speakers** - Four times per year we provide the opportunity for our membership to hear a nationally recognized speaker on a subject that relates to school administration.

5. **Principals' Seminars** - Monthly meetings of principals in Corsicana, Waco, and Temple, designed to allow principals to discuss problems and concerns.

It is hoped that through the following in-depth descriptions of these programs and other factors in the Center's experience such as press coverage, the relationship to the university, and

funding, that the reader will be able to gain a sense of the breadth of the activities of the Center.

Programs

Instructional Leadership Training

During the 1985-86 school year, all certificated administrators in Texas were required to complete 36 clock hours of training in instructional leadership. Those people who received this training are now required to complete 12 additional hours each year. Each new group of administrators will be required to participate in the initial 36 hour training. In the future, all administrators will also be required to participate in a 36-40 hour management training program. The Principals' Center offers the instructional leadership training now, and will offer the management training when the time comes.

Our experience with the training during the 1985-86 school year was interesting. Our Program Advisory Board determined who the consultant would be, and suggested times for the meetings. The consultant, Joan Maxwell, was an expert in the Madeline Hunter Model for Effective Instruction, and had been the primary trainer for the implementation of the Killeen ISD Excel program, which is an instructional improvement program based on the Hunter Model. Her availability determined the dates of the training. This meant that we were forced to meet on Fridays many times, and that the afternoon sessions were not concluded until almost 5:00 p.m. This sort of scheduling was not conducive to positive acceptance on the part of the participants.

We held the sessions in two locations: Waco and Killeen. We began the year with approximately 200 participants in Waco,

and approximately 100 in Killeen, with the Killeen ISD personnel being the bulk of the group at the Killeen meetings. The attendance in Waco remained constant, but the attendance in Killeen dropped dramatically when the administrators from the Killeen ISD learned that the state had approved their Excel training for 24 of their hours. The consultant actually liked working with the smaller group more than she did the large ones.

Participants' responses to the training were varied and interesting. Some members were very supportive of the program, and looked upon it as a way to improve themselves professionally. Others were more neutral, merely tolerating the training with the understanding that it was required and there was no good to be gained by expending energy complaining. Then there were those who did not appreciate the fact that they were expected to participate in the training, and who identified the Center, rather than the state, as the source of their frustration.

The experience in Waco turned out to be a fairly negative one for the consultant as well as the participants. With the large group, there was such a diversity of levels of knowledge of the subject matter that any single presentation would have been inappropriate. However, with the size of the group, more individualized instruction was not possible with the resources available. This situation, combined with the consultant's preference for teaching to smaller groups, led to very few people feeling that the instruction was at an appropriate level.

The experience in Killeen was a different matter. The majority of the people at those sessions were already heavily involved in instructional leadership programs in their districts.

This fact, coupled with the fact that the consultant had taught many of the people before, led to a much more supportive and positive atmosphere at the sessions.

We did have a great deal of success with our final session of the year, both in Killeen and Waco. This session was a stress management seminar led by Dr. Janine Sagert, from Austin, Texas. At that point in the year, the administrators were happy to get any help that they could in dealing with the pressures of their jobs.

Through this experience, we were able to re-affirm that the way to have a successful program is to develop workshops that the participants perceive to be useful in their day-to-day job responsibilities, and to have consultants that the participants are ready to learn from. We have used these guidelines in developing our program for the Advanced Instructional Leadership Training for the 1986-87 school year.

Advanced Instructional Leadership Training

The Baylor Advanced Instructional Leadership Training Workshops are being offered at three sites this year: Killeen, Waco, and Corsicana. At each site we offer two duplicate sessions, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, so that all of the administrators from a building or a district do not have to be away from their job responsibilities at once. Each session consists of three hours of credit. We are offering the sessions in October, November, February, and April. This allows us to maintain sustained contact with our members throughout the year.

The subject of the October sessions was <u>Conferencing</u>. Each

session opened with a one and one-half hour presentation by Mr. Johne Little, Elementary Principal, Killeen ISD, on techniques and styles of conferencing. The second half of the sessions consisted of a presentation by Mr. Jim Walsh, an Austin attorney specializing in school law, dealing with the legal aspects of conferencing. Mr. Walsh lectured about common legal concerns about conferencing, then answered questions that were generated by the Collegial Circles. Response to these sessions was overwhelmingly positive. The participants felt that the information in the workshop was useful to them in the day-to-day execution of their duties. There seems to be a great deal of concern about the legal aspects of the job, and many people expressed a desire to have an attorney at each of the sessions. We anticipate continued success with the training this year because it will be so closely tied to the Texas Teacher Appraisal System.

Collegial Circles

Collegial Circles are based on the premise that administrators can learn from one another and help each other solve problems if they take the time to sit down and talk to each other about them. During the 1985-86 school year, we divided the participants in the Instructional Leadership Training into groups of approximately seven people, and gave them assignments to do outside of the training. This was not received well by the participants, since it meant that they had to spend more than the required 36 hours to get credit for the training. The overwhelming reaction of the participants was, "This is a great idea, but we just don't have time to do these activities."

We are continuing to develop the concept of Collegial Circles during the 1986-87 year. Since we learned from our experience in 1985-86 that time was the major deterrent to participation in Collegial Circles, we have incorporated the meetings into the Advanced Instructional Leadership Training sessions. We have added 15 minutes to the total time for each session, and subtracted 15 minutes from the break, thereby allowing for a 30 minute Collegial Circle meeting without infringing on the required training time and minimizing the extra time required of each participant.

The Collegial Circles serve three main functions. First, they provide an opportunity for people with similar concerns to share their ideas about dealing with those concerns. Second, they provide an organized way for members to have input into the programs and activities of the Center. Third, a leader is identified in each group, who serves on the Program Advisory Board of the Principals' Center.

The Circles are made up of from six to eight people. They have been assigned in a cross-district, job alike format. This means that, to the greatest extent possible, high school principals from different districts are grouped together, assistant principals from different districts are grouped together, etc.

The Circles meet during the time allotted for the Advanced Instructional Leadership Training sessions. During the October session, they had four tasks. These were to generate questions for Mr. Walsh, the attorney who led part of the session, generate questions for David Thompson, General Counsel, Texas Education

Agency, to answer at the meal functions later that month, generate suggestions for topics and facilitators for the Principals' Seminars, and generate questions and concerns about growth plans to be addressed at the November Advanced Instructional Leadership Training sessions. The groups were responsive to these tasks, and were able to give strong input for these programs. Once they met, there was little difficulty in staying on task, and the evaluation of the Circle meetings was for the most part positive. Of course, there were some who felt that this was not a productive use of time, but these were in the minority.

During the November sessions, the Circles were responsible for developing sample growth plans for each of the indicators in the Texas Teacher Appraisal System. Each group was given a domain, and asked to develop growth plans for the indicators in that domain. These growth plans will be synthesized and organized into a manual of sample growth plans for distribution to participants in the Advanced Instructional Leadership Training workshops.

Again, the response of people to the Circles was very positive. The participants are really appreciating the opportunity to discuss ideas and develop strategies for solving problems with people who share common interests.

Our hope is that the participants will come to view the Collegial Circle meeting as one of the more productive and beneficial parts of the time that they spend in the training. Ideally, the Circles would begin to function independently of the training times, but with the amount of time required of school

administrators in the fulfillment of their duties, it is doubtful that very many of the groups will meet at any other time, although some do now.

One group that does meet is made up of Temple ISD elementary school principals, and is led by Kay Psencik, Director of Instructional Services for the Temple ISD. They attempt to meet on a monthly basis over lunch. An agenda is prepared for each meeting, and the participants also bring their own concerns. Mrs. Psencik then follows up with a memo containing the information discussed at the meeting. Jean Sykes, one of the principals involved in the circle, commented that the circle was "very helpful" in dealing with the common concerns of the members of the group.

Meal Functions

The Center attempts to meet the needs of administrators by providing a forum for the dissemination of current information in a timely fashion. With the educational reforms occurring in Texas, there is a real need for up-to-the-minute information from the state education agency. This information is provided at meetings where meals are served. The purpose of the meal functions is to bring the latest information from the Texas Education Agency to the administrators of Central Texas, as well as to provide an opportunity for Central Texas administrators to give feedback to the agency on current issues.

During the 1985-86 school year, we had numerous small functions of this type where topics such as discipline management, the new Texas Teacher Appraisal System, and promotion/retention policies were discussed. We also had two

large functions, one in December called the Christmas Conversation, and one in May called the Spring Summation. The Christmas Conversation featured Dr. Rodney Short, an educational motivational speaker, with entertainment provided by the Baylor A Cappella Choir. The Spring Summation featured Dr. W.N. Kirby, Commissioner of Education for the state of Texas, with entertainment provided by faculty members of the Baylor University School of Music.

We received such a positive response from those who participated in these functions that we have increased this part of our program for the 1986-87 year. In August, September, October, January, February, and April, the Principals' Center sponsors a series of meal functions on the last Tuesday/Wednesday of the month. We begin with a dinner on Tuesday evening at Collins Middle School in Corsicana, followed the next day by breakfast at the Bill Daniel Student Center on the Baylor Campus, brunch at the Temple ISD Administration Building Board Room, and lunch at the Killeen ISD Administration Building Board Room. Our speakers for these sessions this year are Dr. Victoria Bergin, Deputy Commissioner, TEA, and Mr. David Thompson, General Counsel, TEA.

Attendance has gradually increased at each of the meals except the breakfast in Waco. We feel that this may be due to the fact that many principals may feel uncomfortable leaving their schools unattended as the day begins.

Major Speakers

In addition to the Christmas Conversation and Spring Summation, which have been a part of the program for the

Principals' Center since its inception in 1984, we have added a dinner in Killeen in the fall, and a dinner in Corsicana in the spring for the 1986-87 school year. At these events we provide a major speaker. The Fall dinner this year featured Dr. Gordon Cawelti, Executive Director of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, who spoke on Educational Leadership. The speaker for the Christmas Conversation was Dr. Kenneth Cooper, noted authority on aerobics and wellness. He spoke on "The Aerobics Program for Total Well-Being." The March dinner in Corsicana will feature Dr. Gerald J. Swanson, an economist from the University of Arizona, who will discuss "Economic Choices -- A Look Toward the 21st Century." The speaker for the Spring Summation has not been determined yet. Spouses of administrators and school board members are included at these events. We try to have university student entertainment at each of these functions.

Principals Seminars

Principals Seminars are monthly gatherings of principals on a voluntary basis, designed to give principals an opportunity to discuss common problems and concerns. Each meeting is led by a principal, and a meal is served. The meetings are held from 4:00 - 6:00 p.m. on the first Thursday of each month. There are three sites for the Seminars. These are the Administration Building Board Room of the Corsicana ISD, Wiethorn Information Center on the Baylor Campus in Waco, and the high school cafeteria in Temple.

The Seminars are being coordinated by Mr. Jim Kerby, Principal, Temple High School. Mr. Kerby conducted a needs

assessment of area principals to determine what topics to include in the Seminars. Both secondary and elementary principals are being included in the same seminars at this time, and we will continue to do this until it becomes evident that there is a real need to have separate groups for the different levels.

The initial Seminars took place on October 2, 1986. We had determined that we would feel successful in this venture if we had from ten to twelve people at each Seminar. We were very pleased when we surpassed this number in Corsicana and Temple, and met it in Waco. This attendance response is encouraging and makes us feel optimistic about the success of this program in the future.

The subjects discussed in the Seminars were the Texas Teacher Appraisal System (Waco and Temple), and School/Community Relations (Corsicana). The response to the Waco and Temple sessions was very positive. The response to the Corsicana session was for the most part positive, but the subject matter did not seem to hold as great an interest for the participants as the appraisal system would have.

Through a written evaluation, we were able to determine people's individual reactions to the sessions. These included, "We need to talk," "Hard questions were answered," and "Opportunity for additional conversation at dinner was excellent." Only three people did not stay for the meal. Even after the meetings, people continued to visit about their concerns and insights.

The November Seminars all dealt with the Texas Teacher Appraisal System. This topic is so important to principals, that

they were able to continue to share new ideas with each other. The meal was a success in Temple and Waco, but the Corsicana group decided not to have a meal. The evaluations indicated that the participants felt that the experience was very useful in carrying out the daily duties of a principal.

The December Seminars dealt with discipline in two of the sites and professional growth plans in the other site. Texas has recently revised the discipline portion of House Bill 72, which was the major school reform legislation passed in 1984. Principals are very interested in implementing these changes effectively. The growth plan session will be a continuation of the Advanced Instructional Leadership Workshops held in November.

Funding

During the 1984-85 year, participants were not charged any fee for the activities offered by the Center. For the 1985-86 year, a fee of $150.00 was implemented for each member. Baylor absorbed $50.00 of this fee by providing the Executive Director of the Center, graduate students who are involved in administering the program, and facilities for the meetings, so each member was responsible for $100.00 of the fee. Many school districts paid this fee, or split it with the administrators who wished to become members. This system has been repeated for the 1986-87 school year.

Other funding for the Principals' Center comes from various sources. Among these is a program sponsored by the Center for Professional Development which offers workshops for teachers that meet the criteria for Advanced Academic Training that is required by the State of Texas for advancement on the Career Ladder.

These workshops generate a substantial amount of money that is used in the operation of the Principals' Center. A University Research Grant from Baylor and a Phi Delta Kappa Research Grant were also included in the 1985-86 funding. We are also able to supplement our funds with funds from the Baylor Distinguished Lecturer Series when we bring in major speakers.

Press Coverage

Promotion of the activities is accomplished by press coverage of meetings and announcements of upcoming events. The coverage we achieved during the 1985-86 school year was less than we had hoped for. This can be attributed to the fact that notice of our events was not communicated to the press early enough to allow for them to arrange for coverage, and to the fact that we spent a great deal of our time and effort on the state mandated training, which was not newsworthy after the first session. We achieved good press coverage when speakers at our events were state officials such as the Commissioner of Education, the Vice Chairman of the State Board of Education, and the Athletic Director for the Texas University Interscholastic League. We never were really able to generate interest on the part of the press in our meal functions, even though they were led by the Deputy Commissioner of Education for Curriculum.

We channel all press relations through the Public Relations office at the University. The University has recently assigned a person in that department to coordinate news releases about the School of Education, and we are excited about the possibilities that this sort of attention to our program provides. We have found it helpful to follow up with telephone calls to the

newspapers and television stations on the day of a given event from our own office.

There are five basic reasons why we feel that press coverage of our activities is important. These are as follows:

1. Information presented at the meetings is newsworthy.
2. Coverage gives principals publicity and makes the community aware that they are actively involved in continuing to learn about their jobs.
3. School administrators who do not participate are made aware of what they are missing, and may be encouraged to attend in the future.
4. The University community is informed of the activities in which we are involved.
5. School board members are made aware of what is taking place through the Center in the Central Texas area.

Relationship to the University

The Baylor Principals' Center enjoys a strong relationship with the university. Not only does the School of Education, under the leadership of Dean Bill Lamkin, provide substantial support for the Center, but the administration of the University, under the leadership of President Herbert Reynolds, is committed to a good relationship with the elementary and secondary schools of the Central Texas area. Without this institutional support, it would be impossible to accomplish the things that we do.

The Principals' Center also makes a contribution to the University. By becoming involved with the area school administrators on a regular basis, it is possible to build a

positive relationship with them. Through these contacts, the doctoral program in Educational Administration has been brought from a nearly non-existent stage to a healthy group of twelve school administrators who make up the first class of a new program. This group contains people with job descriptions of assistant principal through superintendent. We are very pleased and excited about prospects for this program.

We also make a contribution to the literature through research and reflective writings. Papers on the Baylor Principals' Center have been presented at the National Conference of Professors of Educational Administration, the American Association of School Administrators, and the Texas Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Articles on the Center have been included in Reflections, the publication of the National Principals' Center Network, and an upcoming edition of the National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin. This gives the University positive exposure on a national level.

One of the real contributions that we are able to make is that the professors at Baylor have the opportunity to stay close to the "real world" of public education. Faculty members are invited and encouraged to attend all functions which they can in order to foster healthy relationships with other educators in Central Texas.

Things Learned

In the process of developing this paper, we decided that a section on things that we have learned, even if they are contained previously in the paper, would be beneficial to others who are interested in developing similar Centers. Those things

which we feel have really made a difference in our approach to the Center are as follows:

1. Without the state-mandated training, we would not have nearly the participation that we do.

2. We have much lower attendance at the activities such as Principals Seminars, Meal Functions, and Major Speakers than we do at the required training. However, as these activities gain momentum, attendance has been slowly increasing. We feel that this indicates that we are meeting the needs of principals who want to have more than the required professional growth experiences.

3. Quality consultants and programs are the key to the success of a voluntary venture such as ours.

4. Having duplicate sessions allows principals and their assistants to attend sessions without leaving their campuses unsupervised.

5. Having meetings in the four different places throughout our area allows us to be close to our clients, rather than requiring them to come to us for every meeting.

6. Having a meal at the Principals' Seminars has resulted in principals spending a pleasant time together continuing to discuss areas of concern.

7. The Collegial Circles function better if participants are assigned across district lines and in a "job alike" format, and when the leaders are trained to lead the groups.

8. Implementing a program such as ours at the same time that the most radical school reform movement in the history of the state was initiated made the challenge that much greater.

9. The great majority of the school administrators that are involved in our programs are really interested in doing a

better than average job. This is refreshing to observe in a time when the education profession is being scrutinized and maligned to a great extent.

10. The Apostle Paul's statement that "I become all things to all men that some might be saved," takes on special meaning in light of our work with principals. There are distinct personalities among the districts with which we are involved, and we must change our approach in different districts if we are to be successful. The diversity of our programs is a reflection of this also. We try to meet the needs of principals in as many different ways as possible, so that individuals can find at least one of our activities that meets their needs for growth and learning. The implication for centers that limit their offerings to one type of activity is clear: If you want lasting participation by a diversity of principals, you cannot afford to demand that each principal fit into the mold of what you think he or she should be.

11. In light of Number 10, it is essential that as much input from the field be gathered in designing programs as possible. We have found that one of the most fertile producers of good ideas available to us is the pool of graduate students in both the Masters and Doctoral programs at Baylor. The Doctoral students are especially helpful in that they are all practicing school administrators. This contact with people who are in the "real world" of public school administration, and the ability to get regular feedback from them has greatly increased our ability to offer programs that are timely and that meet specific needs of school administrators.

12. In order to have a successful program of this nature, it is necessary to have a committed individual as a catalyst who has a vision of what a center can be, and institutional support of some kind. Part of the institutional support has to be in the form of personnel to coordinate the activities of the center.

13. Offering state mandated training inhibits our creativity in program development, since the Texas Education Agency has approval power over the mandated programs offered.

14. Money collected for dues is used to fund consultants and staff positions. Meal costs are passed on to participants on a per event basis, thereby ensuring that we at least "break even" on the meals. The exceptions to this rule are the Christmas Conversation and the final meeting in the spring.

15. Regular contact with our members helps keep continuity in our programs. Having the Advanced Instructional Leadership Training workshops four times per year helps us to keep in touch with the members over the entire year. It is also important to announce our upcoming events at each meeting. While some of our members do not like this part of each meeting, we have adopted a "teachable moment" philosophy about these announcements. We have found that we can announce a particular activity or policy over an extended period of time, and we still get questions about subjects that we have answered repeatedly, so we will continue to announce activities as often as we can.

16.

A Look To the Future

In trying to establish the direction for the Baylor Principals' Center in the future, it is helpful to consider some questions raised by Vivian Eads, one of the Baylor doctoral students in educational administration. The questions are as follows:

1. How will the center be different from other organizations?

2. What will it do that other organizations don't do?

3. How can the center be significant in the lives of principals?

4. What will cause better attendance than at other organizational functions?

Reflection on these questions produces an interesting insight into the functioning of the Baylor Principals' Center.

Oftentimes, professional organizations concentrate most of their energy into state or national conventions, with programs that are determined months ahead of time. The local activities that do take place are often not well attended, and tend to place a great strain on the local administrators responsible for planning and organizing the meetings. The Principals' Center provides an organization that can develop, plan, and implement programs that meet the immediate needs of principals in a given area, with a minimum of time and planning commitment from the members. While this view of a center is not necessarily in concert with the "grass roots" concept of some centers, in our area it is appreciated by the members.

By providing a point around which local administrators can gather, and through this gathering increase communication with one another about common concerns, we are able to meet the needs of principals in terms of new information, through workshop and training experiences, and through a sense of collegiality borne of increased contact with one another. Attendance should increase as people learn that they can expect quality programs and positive experiences at our activities.

We feel that we have been able to establish a routine of programs that our participants can count on and begin to anticipate. Each of the programs described above will be

continued as the "core curriculum" of the offerings of the Principals' Center. The challenge is to continue to have content in these programs that will meet the needs of the members.

We are in the process of developing an implementation plan for a National Association of Secondary School Principals Assessment Center for School Administrators. This would allow us to provide a quality service on an individual level for our members.

As we continue to grow and develop, we have three main goals. These are as follows:

1. To increase the feeling of ownership on the part of the members,
2. To make the "core curriculum" as beneficial as possible to our members, and
3. To devise new ways to meet the needs of school administrators as they strive to deal with the ever increasing complexity of our world.

James MacGregor Burns, in his book Leadership, states that "The ultimate test of practical leadership is the realization of intended, real change that meets people's enduring needs." This, then, is the main goal of the Baylor Principals' Center, to encourage and provide leadership for the improvement of education through the personal and professional growth of school administrators. It is an exciting, difficult, and rewarding challenge, and one worth pursuing with all of the energy and resources available to us.